

Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies

Volume 2
Issue 2 Fall

Article 5

December 2015

Nurturing Children's Humanity: Partnership Education

Riane Eisler
Center for Partnership Studies

Follow this and additional works at: <http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps>

Recommended Citation

Eisler, Riane (2015) "Nurturing Children's Humanity: Partnership Education," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 5. Available at: <http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/ijps/vol2/iss2/5>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* is published by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. Authors retain ownership of their articles, which are made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial license (CC BY-NC 4.0).



NURTURING CHILDREN'S HUMANITY: PARTNERSHIP EDUCATION

Riane Eisler, JD, PhD(hon)

Abstract:

This article proposes that the unprecedented challenges of our rapidly changing world require more than piecemeal educational reform. It describes *partnership education* as an integrated template for redesigning the three main components of education: content, process, and structure. In addition, it provides examples of how various elements of partnership education can be incorporated into current classrooms, both in schools and universities. It illustrates how partnership education can help young people develop their full potentials, not only preparing them to navigate through our difficult times but providing them the knowledge and skills to help build a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable future.

Keywords: education, children, human potential, partnership, domination, evolution, gender

Copyright: ©2015 Eisler. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Noncommercial Attribution license (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows for unrestricted noncommercial use, distribution, and adaptation, provided that the original author and source are credited.

What is the goal of education? Over the last decades, the idea has gained ground that the goal is to prepare people to succeed in the market. This is a narrow, and dangerous, trend. The goal of education cannot be just to turn us into better cogs for an economic machine. The goal must be broader and deeper. Education must prepare us to develop our full human potential.

For more than two centuries, educational reformers such as Johann Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Paolo Freire have called for an education that fulfills this vital goal (Montessori, 1964; Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1973; Pestalozzi, 1781, 1976).

Building on the work of these and other germinal educational thinkers and on my research and teaching experiences, I have proposed an approach for redesigning education (Eisler, 2000).

I call this approach *partnership education* (Eisler, 2000). This article outlines guidelines for its development and implementation. It also provides examples of materials that can be incorporated into classrooms, both in schools and universities. Partnership education is designed not only to help young people better navigate our difficult times, but also to help them acquire the knowledge and skills to build a future that is oriented to what I identified in my study of cultural evolution as a *partnership model* rather than a *domination model* of society (Eisler, 1987; 1995; 2007, 2014; Eisler & Potter, 2014).

Although most people may not use these terms, we are all familiar with these two ways of structuring relations from our own lives. We know the tension, pain, and fear of relations based on domination and submission – of trying to manipulate and cajole when we are unable to express our real feelings and needs: of the tug-of-war for that illusory moment of power rather than powerlessness; of our unfulfilled yearning for caring and mutuality; of all the misery, suffering, and lost potential that come from these kinds of relations. Most of us have also, at least intermittently, experienced another way of relating in which we feel safe and seen for who we truly are – in which our essential humanity and that of others shines through, lifting our spirits, enfolding us in a sense that the world can be right, that we are truly valued and valuable.

But the terms partnership and domination describe not only individual relationships. They describe systems of belief and social structures that either nurture and support – or inhibit and undermine – equitable, democratic, nonviolent, and caring

relations. They also describe two different approaches to socialization, and hence to education.

Two Ways of Living and Learning

We are accustomed to thinking of societies in terms of familiar categories such as ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, religious or secular, rightist or leftist, and technologically developed or less developed. While our conventional categories provide important information about where a society is located in time and space, what its ideology is, or what kinds of technologies it possesses, they do not tell us anything about the kinds of relations its institutions and beliefs support or inhibit.

The partnership model and the domination model describe two contrasting social configurations that support two very different kinds of relations in all institutions – from the family, education, and religion to politics and economics. The beliefs and behaviors taught through both formal and informal education are markedly different depending on the degree to which a social system orients to either one of these two models.

In domination-oriented social systems, starting early on, children are taught to accept top-down rankings of domination – man over man, man over woman, race over race, religion over religion, and humans over nature – as inevitable, even moral. This socialization is based on rigid gender stereotypes in which the female half of humanity, and everything considered soft or feminine, such as caregiving and nonviolence, is devalued. At the same time, children are taught that members of the male half of humanity must under no circumstances be like girls or women, lest they too be devalued as effeminate sissies. In this system, it is considered normal and moral for parents to use force or the threat of force to control children, just as the

use of violence or its threat are accepted to control people in the larger tribe or state (Eisler, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2007, 2014; Eisler & Loye, 1998).

In partnership-oriented social systems, children learn, both from modeling and instruction, that relations of mutual respect are considered normal and desirable. There are hierarchies, but rather than *hierarchies of domination*, where power is used to control and disempower others, they are *hierarchies of actualization*, where power is empowering, as in the movement today toward authoritative rather than authoritarian parenting. Gender roles are more fluid; women can and do take leadership positions, and men can express their capacities for care, like the men who are today feeding and diapering babies, redefining fathering to be more like mothering. Also in contrast to domination systems, children learn that violence is not equated with real masculinity. While violence may sometimes erupt, it is not idealized or built into the system, as it is not required to maintain rigid rankings of domination (Eisler, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2007, 2014).

No society orients completely to either the domination or partnership configuration; it is always a *partnership-domination continuum*. However, through an understanding of the partnership and domination models, we can more effectively develop the educational methods, curriculum materials, and school structures that foster a more equitable, democratic, peaceful, and sustainable future. This does *not* mean replacing everything. But looking at education through the lens of the partnership-domination continuum makes it possible to sort out which existing educational approaches we want to retain and strengthen or leave behind, as well as to determine what we want to add.

The goals of partnership education are:

- Helping children grow into healthy, caring, competent, self-realized adults;

- Providing them with the knowledge and skills to better navigate this time of environmental, economic, and social upheavals; and
- Equipping them to create for themselves and future generations a sustainable future of greater personal, social, economic, and environmental responsibility and caring (Eisler, 2000).

Partnership education consists of three core inter-connected components: *Process, Structure, and Content* (Eisler, 2000).

Partnership Process

Partnership process is *how* we learn and teach: educational methods and techniques.

Are young people treated with caring and respect? Do teachers act primarily as lesson-dispensers and controllers, or as mentors and facilitators? Are young people learning to work together? Do they have the opportunity for self-directed learning? In short, is education merely a matter of teachers inserting “information” into young people’s minds, or are students and teachers partners in a meaningful adventure of exploration and learning (Eisler, 2000)?

Partnership Structure

Partnership structure is *where* learning and teaching take place: the kind of *learning environment* we construct.

To what degree, if any, do students, teachers, and other staff participate in school decision-making and rule-setting? Do decisions flow only from the top down and accountability only from the bottom up, or are there interactive feedback loops? In short, is the learning environment organized in terms of hierarchies of domination ultimately backed up by fear, or is it a combination of horizontal linkings and

hierarchies of actualization in which power is used to empower rather than disempower others (Eisler, 2000)?

Partnership Content

Partnership content is *what* we learn and teach: the *educational curriculum*.

Does the curriculum teach students not only academic and vocational skills but also the life skills they need to be competent and caring citizens, workers, parents, and community members? Are we telling young people to be responsible, kind, and nonviolent at the same time that the curriculum still celebrates violence and conveys environmentally unsustainable and socially irresponsible messages? Does the curriculum present science in holistic, relevant ways? Does what is taught include, not just as an add-on but as integral to what is learned, both the female and male halves of humanity as well as people of various races and ethnicities? Does it teach young people the difference between the partnership and domination systems as two basic human possibilities? Do students learn that they can create a partnership way of life? Or is partnership presented, both overtly and covertly, as unrealistic in "the real world"? In short, what view of ourselves, our world, and our roles and responsibilities in it are young people receiving through their education (Eisler, 2000)?

Two Views of What Being Human Means

Education gives young people a mental map of what it means to be human. It does so both explicitly and implicitly. Our biological repertoire offers many possibilities: violence and nonviolence, indifference and empathy, caring and cruelty, creativity and destructiveness. Which of these possibilities we express largely depends on social contexts and cues — on what we experience and what we learn is normal, necessary,

or appropriate (Narvaez & Gleason, 2013; Eisler, 2014). Put another way, what human possibilities are actualized or inhibited depends largely on what we learn both through experience and instruction, starting early on. Specifically, it depends on whether these experiences and instructions orient primarily to the partnership or domination model.

An important part of socialization for either a domination- or partnership-oriented society is what human possibilities are emphasized in both its formal and informal education. In domination-oriented systems, children learn that human nature is bad. In fairy tales we inherited from more rigid domination times, children learn about cruel witches and evil stepmothers. Later, through epics and adventure stories in which heroic males use violence to win, they are taught that violence is the way to resolve conflicts. Today's mass media, both entertainment and news, also focus on hurting and killing. Video games and action/adventure movies and TV shows idealize violence. Situation comedies make insensitivity, rudeness, and cruelty seem funny. Children's cartoons depict violence as fun, without real consequences.

Many aspects of formal education also focus on violence. History courses still emphasize battles and wars. Western classics such as Homer's *Iliad* and Shakespeare's kings trilogy romanticize heroic violence. In science classes, children learn that evolution is a harsh battle for survival, and that we are controlled by evolutionary imperatives to compete ruthlessly.

We clearly do not want to deny that life on our planet evolved in the course of evolution, or that natural selection has been scientifically established. But we must take a closer look at claims that Darwin's scientific theories show that natural selection in our species is driven by pure selfishness through selfish genes. As David Loye shows in *Darwin's Lost Theory* (Loe, 2010) and other works (Loe 2003), in

reality Darwin did *not* share this view. On the contrary, in his book *The Descent of Man*, (1871), Darwin emphasized that, particularly as we move into human evolution, other dynamics, including the evolution of what he called the moral sense, come into play.

Partnership education offers a more balanced view of human nature. It takes into account new evolutionary scholarship showing that natural selection is often advanced by cooperation and caring (De Waal, 2009; Eisler, 2014). Its scientific narratives also provide empirical evidence that our human strivings for love, beauty, and justice are just as rooted in our biology as our capacity for violence and aggression. For example, students learn how, by the grace of evolution, biochemicals called neuropeptides reward our species with sensations of pleasure, not only when we are cared for, but also when we care for others (Niehoff, 1999; De Waal, 2009; Eisler & Levine, 2002). These narratives also highlight the interconnected web of life on our planet, helping children value activities and policies that promote environmental sustainability.

The study of evolution from this perspective does not leave young people with the sense that life is devoid of meaning, that humans are inherently violent and selfish, and that we are helpless to change injustice and suffering. On the contrary, partnership education is education for positive social action on all levels, from personal relations to community, national, and international relations.

If we are inherently bad, violent, and ruthlessly selfish, there is no point in trying to change anything. Indeed, if that is the case, we have to be strictly controlled. This is why stories that focus on the negative potentials of our species are central to education for a domination system. While children need to know that cruelty and violence are human possibilities, we urgently need other stories showing young

people that we can live in a democratic, peaceful, equitable, and Earth-honoring way.

The first step in this direction is recognizing that a one-sided view of human nature that claims we are doomed to sinfulness, violence, and ruthless selfishness is our heritage from earlier times, when structuring relations into rankings of “superiors” over “inferiors” was considered normal, moral, and inevitable. In those times, people believed in the divine right of kings to rule their subjects and the divine right of men to exert absolute control over the women and children in their homes. Violence and abuse were socially accepted, as they were required to maintain these rigid rankings of domination both in families and in the state or tribe.

Unfortunately, even now this way of structuring relations is still considered normal and even moral in some cultures and subcultures (Eisler, 2013). For example, in rigid so-called religious fundamentalist cultures and subcultures, top-down control in the family and state or tribe, the rigid ranking of the male half over the female half of humanity, and the acceptance, idealization, and even sanctification of violence are considered moral.

Yet over the last several centuries we have seen many challenges to traditions of domination — in politics, in economics, and in relations between parents and children and between women and men. These challenges are part of the movement toward more equitable and caring partnership social structures worldwide.

At the same time, there has been massive resistance, as well as periodic regression. This makes it all the more essential that educational curricula worldwide provide young people with a more accurate and hopeful picture of what being human can mean. Much of the hopelessness of young people today stems from the idea that the

only possibilities are either to dominate or be dominated. There are many factors contributing to this distorted and limiting view of what is possible. But a major reason is that education has not shown young people that we have alternatives.

Two Views of Our Cultural Origins

Even today, through both formal and informal education, we are taught that our cultural evolution begins with brutality and violence -- a supposedly natural state that was gradually, and only partially, mitigated by a veneer of civilization.

Stanley Kubrick's classic film *2001: A Space Odyssey* starts with a dramatic scene in which an ape-like creature suddenly realizes that he can use a big bone as a weapon to kill another member of his species. Students can be invited to discuss how this scene mirrors theories that the discovery of tools began with weapons. They can also discuss the familiar cartoon of a caveman carrying a large club in one hand and with the other dragging a woman around by her hair, which communicates still another negative message: not only brutal violence but also male dominance have always been with us – and by implication, always will be.

Students can then be presented with a different story of our cultural origins. In this story, the invention of tools does not begin with the discovery that we can use bones, stones, or sticks to kill one another. It begins much earlier, with the use of sticks and stones to dig up roots (which our closest genetic relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, also do) and continues with the fashioning of ways to carry food (vegetable slings and baskets) as well as mortars and other tools to soften foods for babies. In this story, tools are first fashioned to support, rather than take, life (Tanner, 1981; Morbeck, Galloway, & Zihlman, 1996).

Another part of this story is that the evolution of hominin, and then human, culture follows more than one path (Eisler, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2014). We have alternatives. We can organize relations in ways that reward violence and domination. But, as some of our earliest art suggests, we can also recognize our essential interconnection with one another and the rest of the living world. We can construct social relations based primarily on hierarchies of domination backed up by fear, and ultimately force. But we can also construct hierarchies of actualization, in which power is *not* symbolized by the blade, the power to dominate and take life, but by the chalice, the power to give and nurture life (Eisler, 1987).

Students can be invited to evaluate evidence for this emerging view of human cultural evolution, and compare it with evidence for the older view. For example, they can be invited to look at studies of contemporary foraging societies – directly relevant because that was how our earliest hominin and human ancestors survived – and how these studies show that, for the most part, foraging groups orient more to the peaceful, egalitarian, and gender-balanced partnership side of the continuum (Fry, 2013).

They can also discuss a major theme of Stone Age art: the life-giving and sustaining aspect of nature. In this 30,000 year-old art, still mainly known for its beautiful cave paintings of animals, are numerous female figures: broad-hipped, sometimes pregnant, so-called Venus figurines that were earlier interpreted as ancient counterparts of *Playboy* centerfolds or as idols for fertility cults. Today, these female figures are increasingly recognized as symbols of the regenerative powers of nature (Leroi-Gourhan, 1971; Marshack, 1972; Gimbutas, 1982; Marler, 2011). As the archaeologist James Mellaart notes, these ancient carvings seem to be early precursors of the female deities associated with nature's abundance and creativity found in later agrarian and Bronze Age civilizations (Mellaart, 1967).

Students can also look at the arguments between archeologists about whether or not our early farming communities, going back 10,000 years to the Neolithic, were warlike, chieftain-ruled, male-dominated towns, or whether they were more egalitarian and peaceful. They can be asked to evaluate the evidence. For example, they can learn about Çatal Hüyük, (the largest Neolithic settlement excavated to date), in which there is no convincing evidence of destruction through warfare, houses and grave goods show no signs of chieftain rule (Mellaart, 1967), and DNA studies show no signs that being born male or female had any influence on one's status, wealth, or health (Hodder, 2005).

Students can then look at the archeological evidence that, during a time of great climatic and social dislocations in many areas of the world, there was a shift from this partnership orientation to a domination system (Mellaart, 1967; Lerner, 1987; Mallory, 1989; DeMeo, 1991; Marinatos, 1993; Min, 1995). For instance, in the Americas, even before the European conquests, there are indications that during a time of great drought there were incursions from warlike tribes. Studies of tree rings document a drought in the western part of the American continent between approximately 1275 and 1290. There is archeological evidence of raiders from the north who destroyed or took over earlier Mogollan and Anasazi communities, which scholars believe represent a Golden Age of American prehistory, the Anasazi later becoming the Hopi and Zuñi Pueblo Indians (Gibson, 1980).

Scholars at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing have also traced the shift from more peaceful and egalitarian societies, in which female deities seem to have played leading roles, to a time when Chinese society oriented more to the domination model. For example, in his article "Myth and Reality: The Projection of Gender Relations in Prehistoric China," Professor Cai Junsheng (1995) writes:

NuWa is the most important mythological female figure handed down from the prehistoric age. NuWa was long considered by the Chinese as the creator/creatix of the world. However, a careful examination of Chinese myths shows how, at the same time that the social structure changed to a patriarchal one, NuWa lost her power until finally there are myths where she dies. (Cai, 1995, p. 44).

In Africa, female deities also seem to follow the pattern found in other world regions, in which female mythological figures start out as the Creatrix, then become a wife or mother of a male god, first in an equal role and then in a subservient role, are next demoted to non-divine status, and finally are demonized as witches or monsters. African goddesses can be found which run the gamut of these roles. The South African Ma is the “Goddess of Creation” and Mebeli (of the Congo) is the “Supreme Being”; Haine is the Tanzanian Moon Goddess whose husband is Ishoye (the sun); Dugbo (of Sierra Leone) is an Earth Goddess, responsible for all plants and trees, married to Yataa, the Supreme Being. There are also La-hkima Oqla (of Morocco) a female “jenn” who inhabits a river and rules over other evil spirits; Yalode (of Benin) who causes foot infections; and Watamaraka (of South Africa), the “Goddess of Evil” who is said to have given birth to all the demons (Martin & Wheeler, 1999).

In Europe, the fate of earlier female deities followed similar lines. Goddesses such as Athena in Greek mythology and Ishtar in Middle Eastern mythology became goddesses of war and human sacrifice, reflecting the shift to a more violent, authoritarian, male-dominated social structure (Eisler, 1987, 1995).

A New View of Modern History

From this more holistic perspective, students can see patterns that are otherwise invisible. As detailed in *The Chalice and the Blade* and other books, both prehistory and history can then be better understood in terms of the tension between the partnership model and the domination model as two underlying social possibilities (Eisler, 1987, 1995).

Jumping forward to modern times, using the lens of the partnership-domination continuum, young people can see patterns in what otherwise seem random, unconnected events. What becomes visible is that the massive technological upheavals of the last three hundred years – as we shifted from the Agricultural to the Industrial Age, and now into the Knowledge/Service Post-industrial Age - opened the way to challenges to entrenched patterns of domination.

The 18th century Rights of Man movement challenged the supposedly divinely ordained right of kings to rule, bringing a shift from authoritarian monarchies to more democratic republics. The 18th and 19th century feminist movement challenged men's supposedly divinely ordained right to rule women and children in families. The movement against slavery, culminating in the civil rights and anti-colonial movements, challenged the supposedly divinely ordained right of one race to rule over so-called inferior ones. The rise of organized labor and the gradual shift from unregulated robber-baron capitalism to government regulations (for example, anti-monopoly laws and economic safety nets such as Social Security and unemployment insurance) also challenged entrenched patterns of domination, as do the current global movements challenging economic exploitation and injustice.

The women's liberation and now the women's rights movements are part of this continuing challenge to traditions of domination. So were the 19th century pacifist movement and the 20th century peace movement, expressing the first fully organized challenge to the violence of war as a means of resolving international conflicts. The 20th century family planning movement has been a key to women's emancipation as well as to the alleviation of poverty and to greater opportunities for children worldwide. And the environmental movement is challenging the once-hallowed conquest of nature that many young people today recognize as a threat to their survival (Eisler, 2007).

But there have also been periodic resurgences of authoritarianism, armed aggression, rigid male dominance, racism, anti-Semitism, and other religious and/or ethnic persecutions. Nazi Germany – with its totalitarian controls, brutal violence (including the murder of six million Jews), and its insistence that women return to their subservient place in a rigidly male-dominated family – was a massive regression to the domination side of the continuum. Other regressions have taken on a religious form – for example, the theocratic, brutally violent, rigidly male-dominated regime of the so-called Islamic Caliphate of ISIL.

Increasing terrorist attacks are another symptom of regression, as young men are promised 70 virgins in Paradise for blowing themselves up in attacks on civilians (Feldner, 2001). In Africa and Asia, even after Western colonial regimes were overthrown, we saw the rise of authoritarian dictatorships by local elites over their own people. The recentralization of economic power worldwide in mega-corporations is another regressive trend. In Europe, under pressure from major economic players, governments have cut social services and shredded economic safety nets. In the United States, there has also been a regressive push, including violence against those seeking greater rights, the push to repeal laws providing economic safety nets, the

growing gap between haves and have-nots, and renewed opposition to reproductive rights for women. The backlash against women's rights has been particularly violent in fundamentalist regimes such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. We have also seen ever more advanced technologies used to wreak ever more environmental damage (Eisler, 2007).

Students can be invited to examine these regressions and to think about what lies behind them and what we can do to prevent them. Once again, there are many factors, as there always are in complex systems. But a major factor that becomes apparent using the lens of partnership and domination social configurations is the failure of progressive movements to adequately address traditions of domination in our foundational human relations: the relations between the female and male halves of humanity, and between them and their daughters and sons.

By contrast, those who would push us back to more rigid domination systems have a political agenda that fully integrates the so-called public spheres of politics and economics and the so-called private spheres of parent-child and man-woman relations. A rallying cry in Nazi Germany was the return of women to their traditional (a code word for subservient) place. In Stalin's Soviet Union, feeble earlier efforts to equalize relations between women and men in the family were abandoned. When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran, one of his first acts was to repeal family laws granting women a modicum of rights. The brutally authoritarian and violent ISIL, Al-Quaida, and other terrorist groups make the terrorization and domination of women a centerpiece of their theocratic, violence-based social policies (Shubert & Naik, 2015). Moreover, in all these systems, children are socialized to obey orders through force and fear.

This emphasis on intimate relations based on domination and submission is not coincidental. Domination systems will continue to rebuild themselves unless we change the base on which they rest: domination and violence in the foundational human relations between parents and children and between men and women.

Intimate Relations, Gender, and Diversity

Using the integrative lens of the partnership-domination continuum, students can see that how relations between parents and children and women and men are culturally constructed is foundational to how we perceive what is normal in human relations. It is in these intimate relations that we first learn and continually practice either partnership or domination, either respect for human rights or acceptance of human rights violations as just the way things are.

Young people need to understand these social dynamics if they are to build a world in which economic and political systems are more just and caring. They need awareness that images that normalize, and even romanticize, intimate relations of domination and submission rebuild the foundations for a system based on rankings of domination.

At the same time, they need to be aware of the significance of the fact that child abuse, rape, and wife-beating are increasingly prosecuted, that a global women's rights movement is frontally challenging the domination of half of humanity by the other half, and that the United Nations has finally adopted conventions to protect children's and women's human rights (United Nations, 1979, 1989).

With an understanding of the connections between partnership or domination in the private and public spheres, young people will be able to see that when children are taught a male-superior/female-inferior model of our species, they internalize a

mental and emotional template for equating difference — beginning with the fundamental difference between male and female — with either superiority or inferiority, dominating or being dominated, being served or serving. This template can then automatically be applied to all differences, whether based on race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This is why for domination regimes, be they secular or religious, a top policy priority is the return of women to their subservient place in a male-dominated, punitive family in which fear and force ultimately maintain top-down rankings.

I here want to emphasize that if we are to succeed in stopping regressions to domination systems, and help people worldwide learn to solve conflicts without resorting to violence — which in our time of nuclear and biological weaponry threatens our entire species — we have to work on changing the entire system, not only the so-called private sphere of parent-child and man-woman relations. But unless we pay special attention to these foundational relations, and support those working to change them worldwide, we will not have solid foundations for a more peaceful and equitable future.

Changing education is vital in this regard. Because the social construction of the roles and relations of the female and male halves of humanity is central to either a partnership or domination social configuration, partnership education is gender-balanced. Unlike traditional male-centered curricula, it integrates the history, needs, problems, and aspirations of *both* halves of humanity into what is taught as important knowledge and truth (Eisler, 2000).

A gender-balanced curriculum that does not reinforce the idea that half of humanity is less important than the other half helps us construct mental maps that do not lead to devaluing those who are not like us. It also leads to a greater valuing of traits and

activities stereotypically considered feminine, such as empathy, nonviolence, and caregiving, not only in women but also in men.

Indeed, a core component of partnership education is learning to care for self, others, and the Earth. That the knowledge and skills to effectively do this has not been part of our educational curriculum is a reflection of how education still marginalizes the female half of humanity and anything considered feminine, such as the essential human work of caring for people, starting in early childhood (Eisler, 2000).

This is yet another reason why a gender-balanced curriculum is essential, and why *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century* (2000) provides a wealth of materials that can be integrated into current courses as well as guidelines for designing a gender-balanced curriculum. For example, rather than just adding a bit about the feminist movement once a year during Women's History Month, this vital movement and its positive effects on society as a whole must be woven into the history curriculum. Children need to know how, over the last centuries, women have fought to change laws and customs that deprived them of every civil right — from access to higher education and professions such as law and medicine to the right to bring a lawsuit in their own names, to work outside their homes without their husband's permission, and to vote — and how the struggle for women's rights as human rights continues all over the world today (Spender, 1983).

Not only that, the contributions of women to society must be highlighted in the entire curriculum. To illustrate, *Tomorrow's Children* not only highlights the importance of the work of caregiving in homes, still primarily performed by women, but also provides stories about long-ignored contributions of women in science, art, music, and other fields. The examples of these women are also multicultural and multiracial.

For instance, stories of female African artists are provided for integration into art history classes (Eisler, 2000).

Indeed, partnership education is multi-cultural and multi-racial as well as gender-balanced. Once again, rather than being just add-ons, the contributions of people of different races are highlighted throughout the curriculum (Banks, 1991). One example is the story of the 19th century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who found a creative way to teach himself the alphabet, because it was against the law in the American South to teach black people to read and write. Another is the story of Ruby Bridges, who in the 1950s, as a six-year-old black student, had to go to school every day under the protection of federal marshals to get past angry mobs protesting school integration in the South. Both these stories provide inspiring role models for children who still today face racial discrimination (Eisler, 2000).

Partnership Process and Structure

Until now I have focused on educational content because *what* we learn profoundly affects how we see ourselves and our world (Rokeach, 1973; Rockwell, 1974). I now want to turn to *how* we learn and teach, as well as our learning environments or *where* we learn and teach. If young people are to actively participate in political and civic processes, they must be taught not only about how social and economic advances were achieved; they also need the opportunity to experience relations of mutual respect and caring in action through more partnership-oriented teaching processes and school structures.

In recent years there has been a movement toward partnership process through a number of progressive educational methods. This movement actually started in the 18th century, when Pestolazzi rejected the severe corporal punishment and rote

memorization prevalent in his time (Pestolazzi, 1781, 1976). Today it is exemplified by approaches such as child-centered learning, collaborative learning, peer-teaching, and other methods that nurture children's individual "can-do" impulses while helping them learn to work together to accomplish shared goals.

These and other examples of partnership process lead to positive outcomes for both students and teachers, such as personal motivation, self-directed learning, nonviolent conflict resolution, and altruistic behaviors. This kind of learning helps young people think for themselves and trust their own observations and experiences, fosters responsibility in the classroom, and encourages students to practice caring and ethical behaviors. By cultivating personal and social creativity, it inspires and empowers them to deal with personal, social, and ecological problems in more constructive, creative ways (Eisler, 2000).

This is not to say that teaching that fosters these capacities in children will solve all their problems, particularly for young people who live in situations of desperate poverty, alienation, and violence. But making a child feel seen and cared for can make a big difference.

Teachers who use partnership process can engage young peoples' natural curiosity, stretch their minds, support critical thinking, and help them understand democracy experientially, not only in governments and elections but in all spheres of life. Partnership teaching helps young people learn through acceptance and understanding — through rules that instill respect rather than fear, venturesomeness rather than rote obedience.

Partnership process, however, can only flourish in the context of a learning environment that also orients more to partnership structure. The core elements of

partnership structure are a more egalitarian organizational structure, gender-balance rather than male-dominance, and, in contrast to the domination model requirement of a high level of built-in abuse and violence, emphasis on nonviolent and mutually caring and respectful relations. When educational institutions follow this template, their structure models partnership relations and supports both partnership process and content.

This, however, does not mean a horizontal organization. I again want to emphasize the distinction between *hierarchies of domination* and *hierarchies of actualization*. Hierarchies of domination are imposed and maintained by fear. They are held in place by the power that is idealized, and even sanctified, in societies that orient primarily to the domination model: the power to inflict pain, to hurt and kill. By contrast, hierarchies of actualization are primarily based not on power *over*, but on power *to* (individual creative power and the power to help and nurture others) as well as power *with* (the collective power to accomplish positive goals, as in what is today called teamwork). In hierarchies of actualization, accountability flows not only from the bottom up but also from the top down.

In other words, educational structures orienting to the partnership model are not unstructured or laissez-faire; they have administrators, managers, leaders, teachers, and other positions with responsibility for particular tasks and functions. However, leaders, teachers, administrators, and managers inspire rather than coerce. They empower rather than disempower, making it possible for the organization to access and utilize the knowledge and skills of all its members.

I want to also emphasize that partnership structures are not equivalent to consensus structures, although in certain situations consensus can be appropriate. A mandatory consensus mechanism can actually lead to domination by individuals with unmet

needs for attention, who can hold up decisions and action indefinitely. While partnership structures emphasize participatory democracy, following interactive discussions, the individual or team responsible for reaching a goal can move forward.

Partnership school structures facilitate cooperation among different individuals and groups. But once again — and this is a critical point — partnership as an organizing template is *not* equivalent to cooperating or working together. People work together in both partnership- and domination-oriented structures. Indeed, people regularly work together in societies, institutions, or organization orienting closely to the dominator model; for example, to attack other nations, to persecute minorities, in cut-throat competition designed to put competitors out of business, or to terrorize and kill defenseless men, women, and children.

There is also competition and conflict in the partnership model. But conflict is not used to select winners and losers, or to determine who dominates and who is dominated, but to creatively arrive at solutions that go beyond compromise to a higher goal. Competition is more a striving for excellence, of being spurred to attaining one's highest potentials by the achievements of the other person or group.

In partnership school structures, young people have responsibilities for determining some of the school rules, and for seeing that they are honored. This promotes habit patterns needed to function optimally in the postindustrial knowledge-service economy, where responsibility, flexibility, and creativity are essential. More immediately, it contributes to a mutually respectful and nonviolent school environment. Despite the assumption that adolescents naturally rebel, we may find that when students feel that they are heard and cared for and have a stake in the functioning of their school, they are less likely to rebel — in this kind of structure,

they would be rebelling against rules in which they themselves have had significant input (Eisler, 2000).

Partnership school structures require a higher teacher-student ratio, not only through reduced class sizes but through innovations such as team teaching. This in turn requires far greater fiscal and social support for our schools. While much good teaching goes on now, it is despite the fact that our schools are understaffed and underfunded.

To create the kind of education children need, our policies cannot continue to shortchange education. We must give much greater social recognition to teachers, both through better pay and through increased funding for continuing teacher development, education, and support. Teachers need more time for preparation and assessments, curriculum development, and on-going training. In addition, as I will discuss next, we must pay much more attention to early childhood education.

Early Childhood Education

Psychologists have long told us that early childhood education is critical. This has now been confirmed by neuroscience. When a baby is born, the brain continues to develop and grow in interaction with its environment (Perry, Pollard, Blakley, Baker, & Vigilante, 1996; Niehoff, 1999; Narvaez & Gleason, 2013). So the kinds of environments children grow up in, and whether or not they orient to the partnership or domination side of the continuum, are critical for how children develop.

Development is of course largely dependent on adequate food and other material resources needed for good health care, and on being protected from traumatic or chronic stress such as children experience in war zones or from living in chronic

poverty. But it is also highly dependent on the kind of care a child receives (Perry, Pollard, Blakley, Baker, & Vigilante, 1996; Narvaez & Gleason, 2013), as well as the social support that a country provides for parents and other caregivers (Eisler, 2007).

Unfortunately, our economic system still fails to recognize the enormous value of good care for children, not only in human terms but in purely economic terms. This is why we founded the Center for Partnership Studies' Caring Economy Campaign (CEC) (<http://caringeconomy.org/>). The CEC's Social Wealth Economic Indicators (SWEIs) (<http://caringeconomy.org/newindicators/>) were developed to provide metrics that document the economic value of care work, be it in homes, child-care centers, or any other social institution. SWEIs are tools for changing social and economic priorities; they promote the passage of paid parental leave, caregiver tax credits, and high-quality universal early childhood education — areas in which SWEIs show that the United States lags behind other wealthy nations.

Schools and universities can make a big difference by raising awareness of the value of this essential work -- not only in the United States but in all nations (unfortunately still the majority) in which the so-called women's work of caring for children, the sick, and elderly, as well as early education is devalued. Students can use SWEIs to make both the social justice and the economic profitability case for changing this dismal state of affairs.

Indeed, if the postindustrial economy is to flourish, we need people who can think for themselves and solve problems creatively, rather than just taking orders from above. Moreover, the high-quality human capital for the post-industrial workplace we hear so much about cannot be produced by education that still orients largely to the domination system — education in which children and teachers are constantly ranked

by test results and creativity and flexibility are all too often suppressed rather than supported (Eisler, 2007).

This is where education for caring – for self, for others, and for nature – that is integral to partnership education comes in. Education systems worldwide must incorporate the knowledge we have today about what is, and is not, good childcare. This is essential, because much that is still considered normal in childrearing worldwide is our heritage from more rigid domination times when fear and force in family relations was the model for maintaining top-down rankings backed up by fear and force in all relations.

We know today that childhood care that heavily relies on praise, caring touch, affection, and lack of violence or threats releases chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin that promote emotional stability and mental health. By contrast, if children are subjected to negative, uncaring, fear, shame, and threat- based treatment or other aversive experiences such as violence or sexual violation, they develop neurochemical responses appropriate for this kind of domination environment, often becoming tyrannical to themselves or others, abusive and aggressive or withdrawn and chronically depressed, defensive, hypervigilant, and numb to their own pain as well as to that of others (Niehoff, 1999; Narvaez & Gleason 2013).

Children who are dependent on abusive adults tend to replicate these behaviors with their own children, having been taught to link what love they get with coercion and abuse (Eisler, 1995). They learn to use psychological defense mechanisms of denial and to deflect repressed pain and anger in violence against those perceived as weak. They learn to bully and scapegoat. They later express their pain and rage in pogroms, ethnic cleansings, and terrorism against defenseless civilians. And children exposed to

chronic and unpredictable stress suffer deficits in their ability to learn (Perry, Pollard, Blakley, Baker, & Vigilante, 1996; Eisler & Levine, 2002).

By contrast, more partnership-oriented childcare that depends mainly on praise, caring touch, and rewards for positive behaviors not only has a direct influence on emotional development but also on mental development – on the capacity to learn both in school and throughout life (Montagu, 1986; Leach, 1994; Narvaez & Gleason 2013).

Partnership childcare can be learned, as can an understanding of stages of child development: what babies and children are capable or incapable of comprehending and doing at particular stages, and the harm done to children through traditional punitive childrearing. Hence, in addition to parenting classes for adults, teaching parenting and childcare should start early in our schools in a partnership curriculum. But it is all of education, not only early childhood education and education for parenting, that has to be reexamined and reframed to provide children, teenagers, and adults the wherewithal to live good lives and create a good society.

Humanizing Our Education

Partnership education shows that the struggle for our future is not between capitalism and communism, East and West, right and left, or religion and secularism. It is *within* all these kinds of societies, between a mounting movement toward partnership relations and the strong domination systems resistance.

This takes us back to the importance of curriculum content. The curriculum we teach is the food we offer children's minds: food for thought and, from there, action (Rokeach, 1973; Rockwell, 1974; Eisler, 2000). If we focus only on partnership

process, we give children conflicting messages, creating mental and emotional confusion through process-content mismatch.

Through partnership education — process, structure, and content — we can help young people understand and experience the possibility of partnership relations and institutions. Not an ideal way of living, nor even a completely violence-free way. But a way that supports and encourages relations in which human rights are respected in all areas of life, from families to the family of nations.

Just talking about democracy in abstractions, or in terms of elections that, as young people cannot fail to notice, are controlled by powerful economic entities, only leads to alienation, cynicism, and doubt about the real possibility of participatory democracy. Partnership education can play a major role in helping young people build a truly democratic society.

We can all use partnership education in our homes, schools, and communities to highlight the enormous human potential to learn, to grow, to create, and to relate to one another in mutually supporting and caring ways. Our schools and universities can become models for other institutions, and not only meet their students' needs but also help support other members of their communities.

For example, I would like to see a parent resources center at each school, and social services housed in at least some of the schools in every community. I would like to see small classrooms, real communities of learning. I would like to see universities offer courses in partnership studies, as well as preparing teachers who embody, and are knowledgeable about, partnership. These are part of my vision for an education that truly nurtures our humanity (Eisler, 2000).

This may sound like a tall order, but it is a vision to plan and work for. It is, I believe, a vision that can gradually be realized. Adapted for different regions and cultures, partnership education can be a blueprint for redesigning education to help all children realize their full humanity and preserve our natural habitat. By exploring, taking creative risks, and holding fast to partnership principles and vision, we can make partnership education a reality. This is not only necessary, but doable, once we join together and, step by step, create the education that can make the 21st century a bridge into the better future for which we all yearn.

Additional Resources: Books, DVDs, E-Books, Programs, & Other Materials

Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century by Riane Eisler. (Boulder: Colorado: Westview Press, 2000). Also available from the Center for Partnership Studies (<http://www.centerforpartnership.org/>).

With a foreword by Stanford Professor Emeritus Nel Noddings, this book describes partnership education and includes practical illustrations of how to apply it, focusing on primary and secondary education but also providing materials that can be adapted for universities.

Tomorrow's Children: Partnership Education in Action (DVD) (Media Education Foundation, 2001; Center for Partnership Studies, 2012). Available from the Center for Partnership Studies (<http://www.centerforpartnership.org/>).

This video by prize-winning videographer Sut Jhally combines an interview with Riane Eisler on partnership education with lively classroom scenes of how it works successfully in practice.

Partnership Education in Action: A Companion to Tomorrow's Children, Dee Buccarelli and Sarah Pirtle, eds. (Center for Partnership Studies/ Foundation for

Educational Renewal, 2001). Available from the Center for Partnership Studies (<http://www.centerforpartnership.org/>).

More practical ideas and activities for use in the classroom.

The Partnership Way: New Tools for Living and Learning (New Revised Edition)

by Riane Eisler and David Loye. (Holistic Education Press, 1998; Center for Partnership Studies, 2010). Available from the Center for Partnership Studies (<http://www.centerforpartnership.org/>).

Used in settings ranging from high schools and colleges to churches and self-help groups, this is a resource for teachers and others who want to learn about and experience the Partnership Model.

The Center for Partnership Studies (<http://www.centerforpartnership.org/>) The Center for Partnership Studies offers educational materials on its website as well as online courses and consulting services. Its Caring Economy Campaign (<http://caringeconomy.org/>) provides a new model for economics; its Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (<http://saiv.org/>) focuses on ending traditions of family and gender violence; and its Leadership and Learning program focuses on on-line education.

References

- Banks, J. (1991). Multicultural education: Its effects on students' racial and gender role attitudes. In Shaver, J. P. (ed.). *Handbook of research on social studies teaching and learning*. New York: Macmillan, pp. 459-469.
- Cai, J. 1995) Myth and reality: The projection of gender relations in prehistoric China. In in Min, J, editor in chief. *The chalice & the blade in Chinese culture: Gender relations and social models*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, pp. 34-90.
- Darwin, C. (1871). *The descent of man*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

- DeMeo, J. (1991). The origins and diffusion of patrism in Saharasia, c.4000 B.C.E.: Evidence for a worldwide, climate-linked geographical pattern in human behavior. *World Futures*, 30 (1991).
- De Waal, F. (2009) *The age of empathy: Nature's lessons for a kinder society*. New York: Random House.
- Dewey, J. (1966, originally published in 1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Free Press.
- Eisler, R. (1987). *The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Eisler, R. (1995). *Sacred pleasure: Sex, myth, and the politics of the body*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins
- Eisler, R. (2000). *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Eisler, R. (2007). *The real wealth of nations: Creating a caring economics*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Eisler, R. (2013). Protecting the majority of humanity: Toward an integrated approach to crimes against present and future generations. In Cordonier Segger, M. and Jodoin, S. (eds). *Sustainable development, international criminal justice, and treaty implementation*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press
- Eisler, R. (2014). Human possibilities: The interaction of biology and culture. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 1(1), art. 3, retrieved from:
<https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/ijps/home/vol1-iss1-art3>
- Eisler, R. & Loye, D. (1998, 2005). *The partnership way: New tools for living and learning*. Pacific Grove, CA: Holistic Press: Center for Partnership Studies.
- Eisler, R. & Levine, D. (April 2002). Nurture, nature, and caring: We are not prisoners of our genes. *Brain and Mind*, 3(1), 9-52.
- Eisler, R. & Potter, T. M. (2014). *Transforming interprofessional partnerships: A new framework for nursing and partnership-based healthcare*. Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International.
- Feldner, Y. (2001). 72 black-eyed virgins. *The Claremont Review of Books*. II(1) Fall. Retrieved on 11-28-15 from <http://www.claremont.org/crb/article/72-black-eyed-virgins/>
- Freire, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Fry, D. (Ed.). (2013). *War, peace, and human nature*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, A. G. (1980). *The American Indian: Prehistory to the present*. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, pp. 30-34.
- Gimbutas, M. (1982). *The goddesses and gods of old Europe*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Hodder, I. (2005). Women and men at Çatalhöyük. *Scientific American*, 15(1)
- Leach, P. (1994). *Children first*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.
- Lerner, G. (1987). *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leroi-Gourhan, A. (1971). *Prehistoire de l'art Occidental*. Paris, France: Edition D'Art Lucien Mazenod.
- Loye, D. (2010). *Darwin's lost theory* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Benjamin Franklin Press.
- Loye, D., (Ed.). (2003). *The great adventure: Toward a fully human theory of evolution*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Mallory, J. P. (1989). *In search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, archaeology and myth*. London, United Kingdom: Thames and Hudson.
- Marinatos, N. (1993). *Minoan religion: Ritual, image, and symbol*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Marler, J. (2011). Warfare in the Neolithic? An examination the evidence. *Journal of Archaeomythology* 7, 52-64. <http://www.archaeomythology.org/journal/>
- Marshack, A. (1972). *The roots of civilization: The cognitive beginnings of man's first art, symbol, and notation*. NY: McGraw Hill.
- Martin, H. and Wheeler, T. (1999) *Goddess traditions from Africa*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Mellaart, J. (1967). *Çatal Hüyük*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Min, J. (Ed.). (1995). *The chalice and the blade in Chinese culture*. Beijing, China: China Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Montagu, A. (1986). *Touching*, 3rd edition. New York: Harper & Row.
- Montessori, M. (1964, originally published in 1912). *The Montessori method*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Morbeck, M. E., Galloway, A. & Zihlman, A. (Eds.) (1996). *The evolving female*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Narvaez, D. & Gleason, T. (2013). Developmental optimization. In Narvaez, D., Panksepp, J., Schore, A., & Gleason, T. (Eds.) *Evolution, Early Experience and Human Development: From Research to Practice and Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Niehoff, D. (1999). *The biology of violence: How understanding the brain, behavior, and the environment can break the vicious cycle of aggression*. New York: Free Press.
- Perry, B.D., Pollard, R.A., Blakley, T.L., Baker, W.L., and Vigilante, D. (1996) Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation, and 'use dependent' development of the brain: How 'states' become 'traits'. *Infant Mental Health Journal* 16:271-291.

- Pestalozzi, J. (1976, originally published in 1781). *Leonard and Gertrude*. New York: Gordon Press Publishers.
- Rockwell, J. (1974). *Fact in fiction: The use of literature in the systematic study of society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York: Free Press.
- Shubert, A. & Naik, B.** (2015). ISIS soldiers told to rape women 'to make them Muslim'. October 8, 2015. Video Source: CNN Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/08/middleeast/isis-rape-theology-soldiers-rape-women-to-make-them-muslim/>
- Spender, D. (Ed.). (1983). *Feminist theorists: Three centuries of key women thinkers*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Tanner, N. (1981). *On becoming human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. 18 December 1979. New York
- United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/25. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989. New York; UN General Assembly A/RES/48/104.
-

RIANE EISLER, JD, PhD(hon) is President of the Center for Partnership Studies, consults for educational institutions, businesses, and governments on applying the partnership model, is the author of numerous books and articles drawing from her research as a cultural historian and systems theorist, and speaks at conferences, corporations, and universities all over the world. For more information, see: <http://rianeeisler.com/>

Correspondence about this article should be addressed to Riane Eisler, JD, PhD(hon) at eisler@partnershipway.org